

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED:

1. A method for selectably controlling and customizing source access to a network, wherein the source is associated with a source computer, and wherein the source computer has transparent access to the network via a gateway device and no configuration software need be installed on the source computer to access the network, comprising:

receiving at the gateway device a request from the source computer for access to the network;

identifying an attribute associated with the source based upon a packet transmitted from the source computer and received by the gateway device;

accessing a source profile corresponding to the source and stored in a source profile database, wherein the source profile is accessed based upon the attribute, and wherein the source profile database is located external to the gateway device and in communication with the gateway device, and

determining the access rights of the source based upon the source profile, wherein access rights define the rights of the source to access the network.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein determining the access rights of the source based upon the source profile comprises determining the access rights of the source based upon the source profile, wherein access rights define the rights of the source to access a requested network destination.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising assigning a location identifier to the location from which requests for access to the network are transmitted, and wherein the location identifier is the attribute associated with the source.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein accessing a source profile corresponding to the source comprises accessing a source profile stored in a source profile database, wherein the source profile database comprises a remote authentication dial-in user service (RADIUS).

5 5. The method of claim 1, wherein accessing a source profile corresponding to the source comprises accessing a source profile stored in a source profile database, wherein the source profile database comprises a lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP) database.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising updating the source profile database when a new source accesses the network.

10 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising maintaining in the source profile database a historical log of the source's access to the network.

15 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the attribute associated with the source is based upon one of a MAC address, User ID or VLAN ID associated with the source computer from which the request for access to the network was transmitted.

20 9. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving at the gateway device a request from a source for access comprises the step of receiving a destination address from the source.

25 10. A system for selectably controlling and customizing access, to a network, by a source, where the source is associated with a source computer, and wherein the source computer has transparent access to the network via a gateway device and no configuration software need be installed on the source computer to access the network, comprising:

 a gateway device, wherein the gateway device receives a request from the source for access to the network;

30 a source profile database in communication with the gateway device and located external to the gateway device, wherein the source profile database stores access information identifiable by an attribute associated with the source, and

wherein the attribute is identified based upon a data packet transmitted from the source computer and received by the gateway device, and

an Authentication, Authorization and Accounting (AAA) server in communication with the gateway device and source profile database, wherein the AAA server determines if the source is entitled to access the network based upon the access information stored within the source profile database, and wherein the AAA server determines the access rights of the source, wherein access rights define the rights of the source to access destination sites via the network.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the packet received by the gateway device include at least one of VLAN ID, a circuit ID, and a MAC address.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein the source profile database comprises a remote authentication dial-in user service (RADIUS).

13. The system of claim 10, wherein the source profile database comprises a lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP) database.

14. The system of claim 10, wherein the source profile database includes a plurality of source profiles, wherein each respective source profile of the plurality of source profiles contains access information.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein each respective source profile contains historical data relating to the duration of network access for use in determining the charges due for the network access.

16. The system of claim 10, wherein the source profile database is located within the AAA server.

17. A method for redirecting a source attempting to access a destination through a gateway device, wherein source is associated with a source computer, and

wherein the gateway device enables the source to communicate with a network without requiring the source computer to include network software configured for the network, comprising:

- 5 receiving at the gateway device a request from the source to access the network;
- identifying the source based upon an attribute associated with the source;
- accessing a source profile database located external to the gateway device, the source profile database storing access rights of the source;
- 10 determining the access rights of the source based upon the identification of the source, wherein the access rights define the rights of the source to access destination sites via the network.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein accessing a source profile database comprises accessing a source profile database comprising a remote authentication dial-in user service (RADIUS).

19. The method of claim 17, wherein accessing a source profile database comprises accessing a source profile database comprising a lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP) database.

20. The method of claim 17, further comprising assigning a location identifier to the location from which requests for access to the network are transmitted, and wherein the location identifier is the attribute associated with the source.

21. The method of claim 17, further comprising updating the source profile database when a new source accesses the network.

22. The method of claim 17, further comprising maintaining in an accounting database a historical log of the source's access to the network, wherein the accounting database is in communication with the source profile database.



23. The method of claim 17, wherein receiving at the gateway device a request from a source for access comprises the step of receiving a destination address from the source.

5 24. The method of claim 19, wherein determining if the source computer is entitled to access the destination address further comprises denying the source computer access where the source profile indicates that the source computer is denied access.

10 25. The method of claim 17, wherein determining if the source is entitled to access the network further comprises directing the source to a login page when the source profile is not located within the source profile database.

26. A system for enabling transparent communication between a computer and a service provider network, comprising:
15 a computer;
a network gateway device in communication with the computer for connecting the computer to a computer network, wherein the network gateway device receives source data that represents a user attempting to access the computer network;
and
20 a service provider network in communication with the network gateway device, comprising
an authentication server located external to the network gateway device and in communication with the network gateway device and having therein a source profile database comprising source profiles that represent users authorized to access the
25 computer network, wherein the authentication server compares the source data to the source profiles to determine if the user attempting to access the computer network can access the computer network.

27. The system of claim 26, further comprising an accounting system for
30 maintaining historical data concerning use of the service provider network.

28. The system of claim 26, wherein the authentication server comprises a remote authentication dial-in user service (RADIUS).

29. The system of claim 26, wherein the authentication server comprises a
5 lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP) database.

30. The system of claim 26, wherein the source profile database includes a plurality of source profiles, wherein each respective source profile of the plurality of source profiles contains access information.
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31. The system of claim 26, wherein the source data comprises an attribute associated with the computer and transmitted from the computer to the gateway device.

32. The system of claim 26, wherein the source data comprises login
15 information associated with a respective user.

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